

I'm feeling a little emo

I was talking a few days ago with my future father-in-law and the conversation turned to emo. “What exactly is emo?” he asked. An answer came from the kitchen as his eleven year old daughter entered the room. “Emo is when you wear girl's pants and slit your wrists.” With a very concerned look on his face he turned back hoping for a better explanation.

Finding a definition that captures all of the aspects of emo is difficult. Emo is a noun; “Oh he is definitely an emo.” Emo is an adjective; “That poem is very emo.” It is a music genre, fashion style, personality type and subculture. But what does that all mean exactly?

Emo comes from the word emotion. It describes music, writing, fashion, or a person that concentrates deeply on emotion.

In the late 60's and 70's music became a powerful method in sharing political views and beliefs to mass audiences with a method that captured the emotional tone and message of a political statement. Music brings groups of people that share ideas together. When you have groups of people coming together, a culture begins to form. Certain rules, dress, language, and expectations begin.

Two types of music that relate specifically to emo are punk and metal.

Punk began a culture of anti-government and anti-popular culture. Unnatural colored hair, mohawks, torn or patched clothing, metal studs, straps, and boots are just some of the icons of the punk lifestyle. Metal challenged gender expectations in the early 80's with makeup, tight clothing, and long styled hair. Emo's anti-political and social statements are similar to those of punk and challenges gender roles, similar to that of metal.

Music associated with emo is acoustic or electric power chord ballads with lyrics heavily focused on feelings. Emo refers to a lot of heartbreaking moments such as break-ups and other things that cause remorse, regret, or sadness. Emo literature reflects a very somber tone. Makeup, tight clothing, hair hiding the face, jewelry, and references to bleeding hearts are all typically associated with emo.

To some it might be defined as “tight girl's pants and slitting your wrists,” to others it might be a political and social statement. Emo is still new and like everything else changing. It is a lifestyle and culture.